

* PRETTY SILLY GRUMPY HAPPY DOPEY *

CUTE
BRILLIANT

What Are Adjectives?

BLACK
STURDY

* BASHFUL COLORFUL IMMATURE SMALL *

Adjectives are to a writer what paints are to a painter — they bring color, texture, depth and detail to the scene you are creating.

Suppose you were writing a short paragraph about a night when the moon was visible from your front lawn. You could write this:

One night I sat on the grass looking up at the sky. I saw the moon.

Or you could write this:

One *chilly summer* night, I sat on the grass looking up at the sky. The moon threw *cool, white* light down upon me as if I were in the spotlight on a *dark* stage and the crowd waiting in the shadows was about to explode into *wild* applause.

The words in italics above are adjectives. They add depth to the description and help the reader *feel* as well as see what it was like to be there on the grass looking up at the night sky. They give us more information about the nouns in the sentences.

And that is the main job of adjectives — to give us more information about nouns and pronouns. Because of their important job, adjectives are often the most interesting part of a sentence.

Here's . . . the Adjective!

Adjectives are the spice of a sentence. They do a lot to make things interesting. Here is an ordinary sentence:

The sheriff held the pistol to the light.

The addition of one adjective adds some spice:

The sheriff held the *smoking* pistol to the light.

The adjective *smoking* changes the sentence by telling us something important about the pistol, and it suggests some interesting possibilities about what the sheriff is doing.

Adjectives are words that give us more information about nouns. They tell:

- the color of nouns
- the size of nouns
- the shape of nouns
- the texture of nouns
- the condition of nouns
- how many there are of a noun

Example

Three huge red ants crawled onto the glassy surface of the oval desk, ate most of a day-old enchilada and immediately got sick.

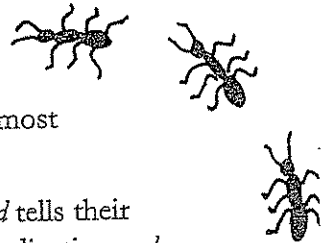
In the example above, the adjective *three* tells how many ants. The adjective *red* tells their color; the adjective *huge* tells their size; the adjective *sick* tells their condition. The adjective *oval* describes the shape of the desk; the adjective *glassy* describes its texture. *Day-old* tells the condition of the enchilada.

Circle the adjectives in the sentences below and draw an arrow to the nouns they describe. (Note: *a*, *an* and *the* are always adjectives. They are sometimes called *articles* or *article adjectives*.)

Example

Pouring hot beef gravy on cold pancakes is no way to start the day.

1. Sour music filtered out of the smelly basement.
2. A hot red dawn opened the sky in the east.
3. A pale white moon sat in the branches like a bird roosting for the night.
4. Nobody likes cold french fries with ice cream.
5. Black hate boiled out of his eyes as he looked at the crumpled car.



Brothers

Below are two columns of adjectives that are like brothers to each other. The adjectives on the left are mild-mannered ones, and their brother adjectives, on the right, are hot-tempered ones. Draw a line from the *mild* adjective on the left to the corresponding *hot* adjective on the right.

Example

mild		hot
ill-tempered	✕	lazy
laid-back	✕	vicious

MILD

1. upset
2. particular
3. overweight
4. unpleasant
5. decaying
6. inexpensive
7. thrifty
8. slender
9. cultured
10. mature
11. soiled
12. timid

HOT

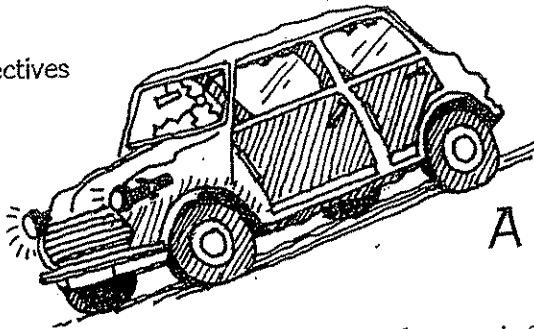
- a. tight
- b. fat
- c. skinny
- d. cheap
- e. gutless
- f. hysterical
- g. bratty
- h. snooty
- i. old
- j. filthy
- k. fussy
- l. rotting

Sometimes mild adjectives are more appropriate than hot ones. Sometimes hot ones are more appropriate. For each pair of adjectives above, write one sentence using the mild adjective appropriately and one sentence using the hot adjective appropriately. (Make note of both the speaker and the audience for each sentence. Use your own paper.)

Examples

ill-tempered (**mild**) and vicious (**hot**)

- Teacher trying to be tactful to the parents of a bully:
Edward can be rather *ill-tempered* at times.
- The President of the United States, explaining why he has sent troops to a battle overseas:
Our troops will protect the innocent citizens from the *vicious* attacks of the enemy.



A Deal You Can Refuse

Many people buy cars because they are influenced by adjectives like *sleek*, *new*, *powerful*, *sporty* and *inexpensive* in the advertisements they read and the commercials they see.

Suppose that someone has a car to sell, but she can't honestly use words like *sleek*, *powerful* and *sporty* to describe it, because the car is a real junker. She doesn't want to come right out and say so, so she tries this ad in the paper:

Mature auto, 4-door, well-traveled, small. Traditional sound system, fog-lights, natural air conditioning, fully carpeted, needs some body work.

Remember, the car is a bomb. The seller has told the truth, but she has used kind, mild-sounding adjectives and adjective phrases to take the sting out of the truth. Draw a line matching the seller's words on the left with the real meanings, listed on the right.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. mature | a. A bowling ball fell through the floor last spring. |
| 2. well-traveled | b. Two flashlights are welded to the bumper. |
| 3. natural air conditioning | c. The scratchy AM radio is stuck on station KYUK. |
| 4. fully carpeted | d. The car is 48 years old. |
| 5. traditional sound system | e. The car has 241,689.9 miles on it. |
| 6. fog lights | f. The driver's window has a rock through it. |
| 7. small | g. No one over 5' tall can sit in the car comfortably. |
| 8. needs some body work | h. Sample squares from Wally's Carpet World are glued to the floor. |

Now write your own ad for an obnoxious pet that you absolutely have to sell or give away, soon, before your father sells or gives *you* away! Remember — be honest, but make your adjectives kind and mild.